

England, in Holland - land of the Provos and Kabouter - using fantasy as a form of resistance and revolt against the authority they despised. And this was also a characteristic of the revolt in France in 1968. Yet the new metropolitan Indians are remarkable for the direct use of satire and of sacrilege against the sacred cows of both orthodox Left and part of the extreme left. Predictably, and with their usual ingenuity, the Communists declare they can detect in their language strains of D'Annunzio, in other words of fascist decadence.

The French anarchist sociologist and veteran of 1968, Georges Lapassade, has a rather different view. In an interview with Panorama called "I defend the Indians" Lapassade says, "I believe it was a revolutionary event due for years, the shattering of the charisma, the taboos, even of the left. At last the children have found strength enough to rebel openly against the father, to tell him they have grown up and can think for themselves. It has been an enormous symbolic event, the reply of Bakunin to Marx after a hundred years."

This may be to put too specific an anarchist stamp on the metropolitan Indians, who would probably place much anarchist doctrine in that category of "serious politics" they want destroyed. [After all, to turn the slogan "proletarian power" into "dromedarian power" is an irony that even some anarchists, some among our more serious minded comrades, would find a little strong...] But the deliberate use of irony and derision and imagination to illustrate the emptiness of Left sloganising, the irreverent conversion of the classic demands of the Left into counter demands attacking the misery of wage labour, the inherent authoritarianism of Party and State, the strait-laced and disciplinarian sobriety of Left wing politics, with an emphasis on pleasure and a kind of sane folly, is obviously akin to the demands and attitudes of the anarchists (particularly perhaps the anarchists of more northern, or transatlantic climes).

It is as yet too early to know whether the events of Rome, Bologna and elsewhere will have any lasting effect as a revolutionary force in Italy today, too early to know whether the Indians will be able to break down their "lumpen bourgeois" reservations to strike up a lasting alliance with the groups closest to them. For instance, apart from their sympathisers among the anarchists, the rapidly growing "youth circles" of proletarians specialising in "self-reduction" (autoduzione) with attacks on cinemas, opera houses, theatres, supermarkets, luxury shops, etc., and often using the language of the Indians.

The question remains, what kind of rebellion is this? Is it one that is bound up with the society it is challenging, a kind of spin-off of consumerism that can be recuperated by the Left, or as the Left would say, by the Right - the radical Right? Is it a mainly negative protest against all that offends natural justice in the power structure, the corruption and clientelism, the bureaucratic nightmare, the juridical farce, the devastation and poverty, etc, etc? Is it nihilism ("anarcho-nihilism" as its opponents

would dub it) or is there a real desire for social revolution based on a real idea and acceptance of its consequences?

There are some signs that the consequences have not been fully thought out as yet. One rebel is quoted as saying "There is no need to have objectives. When you have objectives that means the movement is already on the point of dying. Besides there's the risk of actually achieving them. If you start to ask what you want of life as soon as you leave your mother's body you'd be old after six months..."

This is where the anarchists, divided as they are in Italy about the dangers and values of such groups\*, could play, not a leading but a clarifying role.

GF

\* See for instance the current polemic between the *A rivista anarchica* group and *Anarchismo on Parco Lambro* and the "youth cult."

## and the arrests

The Italian state has lost no time in retaliating against the massive demonstrations and disturbances in the country, in which students were joined by large numbers of workers and unemployed. The Italian anarchist weekly *Umanità Nova* reports: "... more than 100 comrades are in prison, and one in the cemetery, all the movement's radios have been shut down and the repression continues with new police provocations. On Thursday, 17 (March) the first trial was very rapidly put in motion, accompanied by the most barefaced negation of normal court procedures. The lawyers summoned at 9.30 in the morning before the trial began, one of the accused reduced to a physical wreck by police beatings and by hunger strike, carried into the court on a stretcher, the defence refused the possibility of producing documents freely: the result of all this has of course been extremely heavy sentences produced from fabricated charges. *Unita* and the bourgeois papers have backed the police all the way: a comrade, Francesco Berardi (Bifo) has been forced to go into hiding because of the frame-up against him actually charging him with the killing of a fellow comrade Lo Russo. In its paranoid articles *Unita* (the Communist Party organ) has also referred to other known comrades as "notorious provocateurs." The lawyers have publicly complained against continual vexations and the maltreatment of the comrades in gaol. The court has of course ignored them."

Now arrests have been made in Rome in connection with the independent Radio Alice which supported the actions of the "autonomists" and other groups during the Bologna demonstrations and is said to have advised demonstrators on military tactics. The arrests have been accompanied by a series of raids. One left wing militant, Angelo Pasquini, was arrested in church while at the funeral of his father. According to press reports the charge against him of "instigation to crime and subversive

association" is related to the activities of the editorial group of a paper called *Zut* which has emerged from the new student movement in Italy. Pasquini also collaborated on several of the free radio stations, including the Roman Radio Blue and Radio Citta Futura, and through them defended Radio Alice after it had been closed down by the police during the violence.

Another earlier example of the repression in Italy is the very disturbing sentence meted out to a left wing militant, Fabrizio Panzieri. He was sentenced to 9 years' imprisonment under the ambiguous charge of "moral complicity" in the murder of a right wing Greek student, although it is generally acknowledged that he did not commit the murder. His treatment incensed the Indians and the other groups of the new movement.

In the meantime we cannot forget the continuing persecution of our anarchist comrade Giovanni Marini.

He was recently summoned to court yet again to answer eight charges, connected with statements he had made during various phases of the trial. On several occasions Marini had expressed his views on Zarra, Lamberti etc., the public ministers and presidents of tribunals who have been persecuting him for years.

Of the eight charges only that relating to Zarra (described by Marini as a "fascist" and "dishonest") and to the court of Vallo della Lucania ("Spanish tribunal") were considered to be punishable, according to the minister, who requested acquittals for the rest. Presided over by the Christian Democrat Rotundo, the court sentenced Marini to 2 years' 8 months for this crime of opinion alone!

MARINI MUST BE RELEASED.

## MAY DAY PICNIC

The Mayday Picnic and public meeting, organised by South London Anarchists, will of course take place on Sunday (1st May) and not on Saturday as reported in the last issue. It will start at 1 p.m. with a picnic on Clapham Common near Windmill pub and the children's playground. A football match between North and South London is planned for 3 p.m. and a public meeting, with speakers to include Philip Sansom and Nicolas Walter, for 4 p.m. at the bandstand. In case of bad weather phone: 01-622-8961. Speakers from outside London welcome.

## ARMY RETREATS

AS reported in Freedom vol. 38 no. 5 Aberystwyth Anarchist Group have been organising a petition condemning the use of a nearby beauty spot as an army training ground. As a result of the large amount of support received by the group from local residents, and the consequent pressure brought to bear on the army, it has now had to abandon its plans to use the land. This, despite having had permission from the Council to do so before the petition was organised.

## WE WERE HAPPIER?

Dear Comrades

I found it difficult to follow the figures in Arthur Moyse's article "But we were happier", but from what I could make of them it seems to me that he is up the creek.

I was a wages clerk in the 1930s and the wage of an unskilled worker was £2.10.0. for a 48 hour week. Deductions were 10d. National Health and 9d. Unemployment Insurance, leaving a take home pay of £2.8.5. There was of course no Income Tax for the lower paid. My parents rented a self-contained flat for 7s.6d. a week and my mother could buy eatable meat for 2d. a pound.

In this area today an unskilled worker has to work overtime in order to be able to take home £40 a week, probably the same 48 hours his predecessor worked. The rent of a self-contained flat is £15 if you are lucky and eatable meat is 65p. a pound and more. Houses that I saw built and sold for £250 are now fetching £10,000 plus. Statistically this reads as follows:

	% of wages (equivalent hours)	
	1930s	1970s
Accommodation	15	38
Meat	34	1.6
Cost of house	2 years wages	5 years wages

From this it seems beyond dispute that in two of the basic essentials of life, meat and shelter, the unskilled

worker of the 1930s was better off than his present day counterpart.

What is also indisputable of course (and we don't need statistics to show us this) is that in terms of comfort, the quality of houses, clothing, household goods, the labour-saving devices available, the 1970s worker is much better off than in the 1930s. Also in terms of security. Basic dole money in the 1930s was 10s. a week, or 20% of the unskilled wage. It is much higher today and in some well publicised cases it is even greater than a working wage.



The question therefore of whether the standard of living is higher today than it was in the 1930s seems to depend on what you want out of life. If you want comfort and security, the standard of living is higher today. If you want fewer restrictions and cheaper basic essentials it was higher in the 1930s. The whole trend of modern life is towards the former and away from the latter, but for myself, I know I should be happier to be moving in the opposite direction.

Yours fraternally  
Geoffrey Barfoot

## MAX STIRNER

Dear Editors

I'm not sure about Geoffrey Webster's suggestion (letters, 19.3.77) that Max Stirner's philosophy resembles that of Aristippus of Cyrene. It seems that Aristippus proposed pleasure as the ethical end of life (not "gentle" pleasure: for him sensation consisted in a movement, pleasureable when gentle, painful when rough, so all pleasure was a "gentle movement"). Stirner however proposed no ethical end at all. Once you feel you are not achieving the ethical end of enjoying yourself, enjoyment becomes a duty and you cannot enjoy it!

I haven't read *The Ego and His Own* twelve times, but I think Stirner would never have faulted a person who chose something else instead of pleasure, provided the choice was psychologically free - not the outcome of any sense of obligation. Stirner's motto was Goethe's line 'I have set my affair on nothing', i.e. not even on pleasure.

There is a theory, psychological hedonism, that whatever you choose you are motivated by a desire for pleasure, and it is true that Stirner does some times seem to hold it. But not only do I reject that theory, I think Stirner's teaching as a whole is clearly against it - though he may have been confused by it, as many others have been. John P. Clark's refutation of this theory, in his

book *Max Stirner's Egoism* is not, therefore, fatal to Stirner.

Actually there is no choice, no "free will"; and I think the appeal of psychological hedonism to Stirner was precisely that it excludes the possibility of choice. Stirner's view is summed up near the end of his book in the words: 'If religion has set up the proposition that we are sinners together, I set over against it the other: we are perfect together! For we are, every moment, all that we can be; and we never need be more.' It is the feeling that I need to be more than what I am that is my downfall, my stupidity, which leads to greed, violence, and every form of disorder.

I don't think it is strange to call Stirner "religious" (whether that excludes "individualist-anarchist" is a matter of definition). For example, there is much in Taoism and Zen Buddhism that is in perfect harmony with his philosophy. 'What do you lack', asked Lin-chi, 'in the way you are functioning right now? What will you add to where you are?'

As for "uniqueness", I would suggest that what Stirner was trying to express was that every human being, in the words of Alan Watts, "may be seen as one particular focal point at which the whole universe expresses itself... every individual is a unique manifestation of the Whole."

Yours sincerely  
Francis Ellingham

## "DEVIL'S ISLAND"

Dear Comrades

David Sedley pointed out quite rightly that Tony Bicat's play "Devil's Island", which I reviewed in the previous issue (5 March), contained an error regarding the Anarchists in Spain. In the play one character refers to the Anarchists as the POUM. I had noticed this error but I assumed it was an actor's slip rather than the playwright's. Now that the script has been published in "Plays & Players" it is clear that the error lies with the writer.

I have spoken to Tony Bicat about this and he admits that it was simply an error. The play was put together by the group as a whole with actors bringing in their own ideas and Tony acting as an inspired scribe. He added that the POUM - FAI mistake was not the only one. If "Devil's Island" goes on tour again after the Royal Court performances it will be in a more historically accurate form.

Yours fraternally,  
Larry Law

## WILLIAM MORRIS

Dear Freedom,

Best wishes for the future and compliments on the quality of recent issues, notably in the excellent range of articles in the Review section. May I point out, however, some quite serious errors in the article on William Morris (Jan 21st Review).

p. 10 David Nicoll was not 'framed in a bombplot' but gaoled for printing an article in *Commonweal* (9.4.1892) attacking the judge in the trial of Fred Charles, Victor Cailes, Jean Battola and three others of the Walsall anarchist group who had been framed in a bomb plot. He had asked at the conclusion of his article on the trial, referring to the judge and Home Secretary, "Are these men fit to live?" For this he was gaoled for 18 months.

p. 10. H. B. Samuel whom Nicoll later attacked as a police spy was brother-in-law of Martial Bourdon who was blown up in Greenwich Park, not Auguste Coulon. Coulon was in fact the agent provocateur who betrayed the Walsall group.

p. 10. There is a careless reference to Nicoll as proprietor of *Justice*, which should surely read *Commonweal* since *Justice* was the S.D.F. organ.

I'd like to say in conclusion that whilst it was a pity the article contained these errors, I most wholeheartedly agreed with its broad conclusions condemning the assorted attempts to "claim" William Morris' ghost for various Marxist sects.

Yours,  
Grayson Holden

